

Vasectomy Service

What you need to know about your vasectomy

A service provided by

Sheffield Teaching Hospitals



NHS Foundation Trust

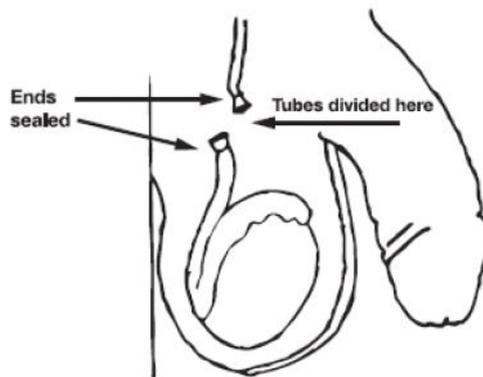
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What is a vasectomy?

A vasectomy is a permanent method of contraception for men. The decision to have a vasectomy should be taken very seriously and only if you are certain that you will never wish to father a child in the future. You will have an opportunity to discuss all issues related to the operation at an assessment clinic (see page 9).

The Vas Deferens is the name of the tubes that carry the sperm from each testicle to the urethra/ penis.



At Sexual Health Sheffield we use a method called a 'no-scalpel technique', which is performed under local anaesthetic.

During a vasectomy operation a piece of the Vas is taken out on either side just above each testicle and the ends are sealed using cautery. It will take a number of months after the operation for the fluid that is ejaculated to be cleared of sperm and you will remain fertile during this time.

Once these sperm are cleared, newly made sperm cannot pass into the fluid you ejaculate and you will no longer be fertile.

Is a vasectomy reliable?

The operation is very reliable - it is over 99% effective, once the fluid that is ejaculated is clear.

In about 1 in 200 cases, apparent failure may occur in the first few months if the operation is unsuccessful for any reason or the reservoir of sperm has not been cleared. This is why it is important to have semen checked to confirm "all clear" before you can rely on it.

Pregnancies occur in about one in 2,000 cases following vasectomy as a result of the Vas rejoining years after the operation. This is a very low chance - it is much lower than the chance of pregnancy with other methods of contraception.

Will it make me feel different?

Your testicles will still produce testosterone, the male hormone, the same as before.

Your feelings, sex drive and ability to have sex will remain the same. You will still grow a beard, remain just as manly, will not put on weight and your voice will not change.

The only difference is that there will not be any sperm in the semen. Sperm are still made by the testicles but are absorbed by the body as quickly as they are made.

You will still make the same sexual fluids because this is made further down the tubing than the sealed off part of the Vas. The appearance and amount of the semen and feelings of orgasm will be the same as before.

Are there any risks?

Vasectomy has been available for many years. Research now shows that there are no serious long-term health risks associated with vasectomy.

Up to 4% of men can get chronic pain following a vasectomy operation. This is associated with inflammation of the testes and epididymis (tube connecting the testes to the Vas Deferens) and can last weeks, months, years, or perhaps be life-long. In most cases such pain can be controlled using over-the-counter painkillers.

Side effects you may experience:

- The most common problems immediately after vasectomy are pain, swelling and bruising. These will usually resolve in a few days although bruising may take up to two weeks after the operation to fade.
- Wound infection can sometimes occur following vasectomy.
- Up to 5% of men may get localised collections of blood called haematoma. This will resolve gradually over 3-6 months, and most will require no further intervention.
- After one week the wound will usually have healed completely.

Can a vasectomy be reversed?

It is best to have a vasectomy on the understanding that it is permanent. Reversal operations are only rarely performed on the NHS but can be performed at a cost through the private sector.

It is possible to rejoin the Vas tubes, however the success rate in producing further pregnancies is less than 30% because many men produce antibodies to their sperm following a vasectomy.

What should I think about before deciding to have a vasectomy?

You should only have a vasectomy if you are certain that you do not want to have any, or any more, children. If you have any doubts, consider another method of contraception until you are completely sure.

You shouldn't make the decision about having a vasectomy after a crisis or a big change in your life – for example, if your partner has just had a baby, or has just terminated a pregnancy.

If you have a partner, discuss it with them before deciding to have a vasectomy. If possible, you should both agree to the procedure, but it is not a legal requirement to get your partner's permission.

You can have a vasectomy at any age. However, if you are under 30, particularly if you do not have children, the doctor may be reluctant to perform the procedure.

The doctor does have the right to refuse to carry out the procedure if valid consent is not obtainable; likewise if there is evidently a high risk of regret and you are not able to affirm your decision.

What if I decide not to have the operation?

If after considering the information in this booklet, you decide a vasectomy is not right for you, please let us know so we can close your file. You may want to consider using another method of contraception - please see page 8 for information.

What other reliable methods of contraception are available?

The following are very reliable reversible methods of contraception for women:

- The Implant (Nexplanon)
- Intra-uterine device (Coil)
- Intra-uterine system (Mirena)
- Depo-Provera injections
- Combined oral contraceptive pills
- Progestogen-only pills (minipills)

How to access contraception:

To access contraception, you or your partner can either contact your GP or visit Sexual Health Sheffield.

For opening times please visit:

- **www.sexualhealthsheffield.nhs.uk**

Or telephone:

- **0114 226 8888, Option 3**

What happens in the vasectomy service?

There are three stages:

1. An assessment appointment
2. The operation
3. Sperm tests to check the operation has worked

The assessment appointment:

You and your partner will first have an assessment appointment (sometimes called vasectomy counselling). A nurse or doctor will discuss the vasectomy operation with you both and check there are no reasons why you should not have a vasectomy. During the assessment appointment, you will also be swabbed for MRSA. This appointment will be carried out at the Royal Hallamshire Hospital.

Please note that vasectomy operations at Sexual Health Sheffield are carried out under local anaesthetic at Central Health Clinic, 1 Mulberry Street. If the nurse or doctor feels that a general anaesthetic is required, your GP will be asked to refer you to a hospital service where the operation will be carried out, usually as a day case.

You will have the opportunity to ask any questions.

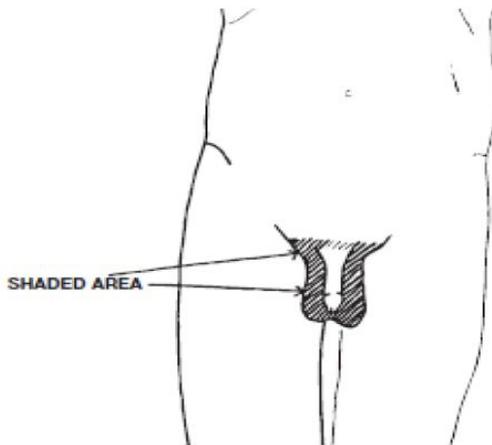
You will need to make sure you use reliable contraception until you are given the 'all clear' - this will be discussed and condoms are provided if necessary. If you and your partner choose a different method of contraception, your partner would need to attend Sexual Health Sheffield or her GP to arrange this.

At the end of the assessment you will be able to book your operation date. This will usually take place between two and six weeks later. If you need longer to decide this is fine and we can delay your operation for as long as six months. If you need to wait longer than this, the nurse or doctor will need to speak with you again so you are still familiar with all

the information discussed at your assessment.

Preparing for the operation:

1. Two nights before the operation, shave the front and side of the scrotum including the hair around the base of the penis (the shaded area in the diagram). Use a wet razor with soap or gel, do not use hair removing cream or wax.



2. Have a bath or shower immediately before coming to the clinic.
3. Eat a light meal, e.g. toast, cereal or soup at least two hours before coming to the clinic.
4. On the day of the operation do not drink any alcohol before attending your appointment.
5. Bring a pair of tight cotton jockey-type pants (not boxer shorts), a jock-strap or tight swimming pants.
6. Inform the clinician if you develop any sensitivity to local anaesthetic or medication.
7. Expect to be at the clinic for between one to two hours.
8. Another adult may accompany you on the day of your operation and can sit with you during your recovery.

9. You should **not** drive yourself home. If you were involved in an accident your insurance may not be valid. Arrange to be driven home or for someone to accompany you home, preferably in a taxi.
10. Patients can be dropped off and picked up outside the main clinic doors on Mulberry Street, but the nearest car parks are on Arundel Gate and Eyre Street.

The operation appointment:

Operations are done on a Wednesday at the Central Health Clinic, 1 Mulberry Street, under a local anaesthetic. The operation itself will take about 20 minutes.

The skin of your scrotum will be cleaned with antiseptic then injected with local anaesthetic and will become numb (as is the case when a dentist numbs a tooth). Each Vas tube is identified and isolated with vasectomy instruments.

A small opening will be made in the front on either side of the scrotum. You will feel some pulling as the Vas is brought to the surface, which is sometimes uncomfortable. A hyfrecator (machine that cauterizes tissue) is used to remove a short length of the Vas and will seal the cut ends of the Vas with cautery.

After the operation you will be taken to a separate room to rest a while, and encouraged to have something to drink. This will help you to recover and you will be able to go home as soon as you feel well enough.

You may wish to bring a personal music player into theatre with you, to distract you while the operation takes place. This is fine but please let the clinician know before you go into theatre, so that they give you a chance to get ready.

After the operation:

For the first hour or two afterwards, you will not have any discomfort. This is a good time to get home. If you feel any discomfort, take paracetamol or your usual painkillers as directed. For the rest of the day take things easy. The next day you may feel sore.

- It is very important that you rest and support your scrotum well for at least 48 hours.
- Keep the area dry for at least 48 hours after the operation. You may then have a bath or shower. **Be careful to dry the area well by dabbing it - do not rub it.** No further dressings are necessary.
- It is advisable to take a few days off work. This would usually be the rest of the week but it may be more if you have a manual or physically demanding job.
- It is sensible to avoid exercise for two weeks and contact sports for at least four weeks.
- The operation does not interfere with passing urine.
- You can start having sexual intercourse again as soon as the wound is comfortable.

Remember, you are still fertile until your sperm test is clear. You must use contraception until you get a letter telling you that your sperm test is clear.

Minor side effects:

Swelling may occur. For this, continue to rest, support the scrotum more firmly and apply something cold e.g. an ice pack; ice cubes in a plastic bag or a 4oz packet of frozen peas covered by a clean cloth.

Bruising is common and should fade in a few days with no problems. Treat as for swelling and to aid recovery.

If there is any minor bleeding apply firm pressure to the wound for at least five minutes then treat as for swelling.

If there is any redness treat it as for swelling. If it does not settle in one day or if it is accompanied by pain or discharge from the wound then call the clinic straight away and ask to talk to one of our surgeons. If the clinic is closed (either at night or at the weekend), you should go to your local NHS Walk In Centre or Accident and Emergency Department.

Up to 5% of men may get localised collections of blood called **haematoma**. If you think this has happened call the clinic and ask to talk to one of our vasectomy clinicians.

Useful contact

If you are at all worried contact the clinic for advice by calling:

- **0114 226 8888 Option 3**

Providing specimens

Following the operation there will be millions of sperm left in the storage tubes. These can only be discharged by regular ejaculation during the weeks after your operation.

A sample of semen will be checked 16 weeks after your operation and most men will be clear of sperm at this stage. If this is free of sperm you will be given the all-clear, and both you and your GP will be notified by post.

Some men will continue to produce a few sperm and they will need to ejaculate more times before the semen is completely clear of sperm. If this is the case, you will be asked to provide a further sample six weeks later.

It is essential to use other contraceptive methods until your semen is clear of sperm. **If you do not continue using other contraception until we advise you that your operation has been a success, you risk having an unplanned pregnancy.**

You will be given a sample pot with further notes on how to provide a sample - please read this carefully.

Specimens should be taken to:

Andrology Department
Level 4, Jessop Wing
Tree Root Walk
Sheffield S10 2SF

Listening to you

We are committed to delivering safe, effective and high quality care and ensuring all our patients are treated with respect to maintain their dignity. We would like to hear from you at any time with your concerns, suggestions or comments to help us to continue to improve our services.

You can do this informally by speaking to any member of staff or by completing a comments form (available in the waiting room) and handing it back to the receptionist.

If you prefer, the **Patient Services Team (PST)** provides a point of contact for patients who have a concern but either don't know which member of staff or department to raise it with, or feel that they need to speak to someone outside of the service to which their concern relates.

The PST can be contacted Monday to Friday 9.00am to 5.00pm.

Telephone: 0114 271 2400
Via email: PST@sth.nhs.uk
In person: Patient Partnership Department
B Floor
Royal Hallamshire Hospital

Contact us

Telephone 0114 226 8888, Option 3
Fax: 0114 271 3408
Website: www.sexualhealthsheffield.nhs.uk

If English is not your main language, an interpreter can be arranged - please contact the clinic before your appointment to arrange this.

Alternative formats can be available on request.
Please email: alternativeformats@sth.nhs.uk

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